

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume 48, Number 1

February 1997



The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is to encourage and support a spiritual orientation to life, to promote the practice of prayer, meditation, and service to others, and to help bring about a deeper spirit of unity among humankind.

A Message from the President	2
From the Editor	4
Hope and Healing: The Work of Joan Borysenko, <i>by Joyce Davidson and Rebecca Laird</i>	6
Overcoming Ambivalence and Confusion about Prayer, <i>by Larry Dossey, M.D.</i>	10
A Transforming Experience: Apache Christ, <i>by Barbara St. John</i>	14
Prayers	18
Mysteries of St. Nectan's Glen, <i>by Carolyn Foote Edelmann</i>	21
Finding God Within Ourselves, <i>by Robert O'Rourke</i>	26
Illuminations	32
Compassionate Presence, <i>by Kathy McGrane</i>	33
Silent Retreat, <i>by Ted Kepes, Jr.</i>	36
New Poetry	43
Letters and Links	46

Cover photo by Robert F. Campbell.

Dear Reader,

Does it snow in your part of the world? It does here--frequently and often heavily during the winter months. Sometimes, as I strain to clear the driveway, my mind turns grey and sullen as the weather.

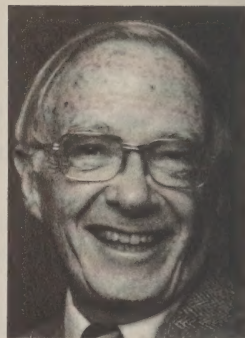
I forget that underneath the snow, seeds and bulbs that will burst forth to bless us with their green glory in the Spring are silently thrusting upward toward the hidden sun. I think that much the same is true for us.

In the worst of times, we forget the seeds of love, compassion, and joy that have been planted in our souls at birth. We forget to water and nourish them with our prayers, our spiritual reading, our sensitivity to, and awareness of, the sacred in and around us and in all living beings.

At our best, we help bring those spiritual seeds to full flower every time we put others first, every time we treat others--the stranger and the outcast as well as our friends and loved ones--with loving kindness. As spiritual gardeners, we cultivate our souls every time we remember that there is that of everyone in each of us, that we are all spiritual beings, however crippled, deprived, or desperate we may be at any given time, that we all wish to be happy and to be free from suffering.

We water and nourish those spiritual seeds in the ground of our being every time we remember that we are not separate from anyone or anything in the universe. Maintaining that state of awareness is crucial to our spiritual health, and in a very real sense that's what *Fellowship in Prayer* helps us do.

Through prayers, photography, poetry, stories of personal experiences and the sharing of problems, joys, and, yes, "miracles" that shine through the clouds that darken everyone's existence from time to time, *Fellowship in Prayer* helps us to stay aware of the spiritual nature of life.



Many of our readers have told us, however, that our title, *Fellowship in Prayer*, doesn't adequately describe our contents or mission ("to encourage and support a spiritual orientation to life, to promote the practice of prayer, meditation, and service to others, and to help bring about a deeper spirit of unity among humankind"). We think they may well be right, so we are considering giving our publication a new name.

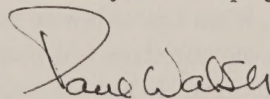
In this time of new beginnings, then, we invite you to tell us which of the following new titles you think best describes what our publication is all about:

<i>*Spiritual Paths</i>	<i>Spiritual Living</i>	<i>Spiritual Journeys</i>
<i>Experiencing the Sacred</i>	<i>The Joy of Prayer</i>	<i>Healing Wisdom</i>
<i>Spiritual Wisdom</i>	<i>Spiritual Awakening</i>	<i>Sacred Journeys</i>
<i>Blessings</i>	<i>Joyful Living: Through Prayer and Meditation</i>	

* All suggested titles would carry the subtitle: A Fellowship in Prayer publication.

One of those titles is joyfully working its way up through the snows of February to a full flowering in June. Your vote can help tell us which one it is! Just write your choice on a piece of paper and mail it off to us in the postage-free envelope in the middle of the journal.

Thank you for helping!



Paul Walsh

The first thing I do upon entering the Fellowship in Prayer office is to check my mail.

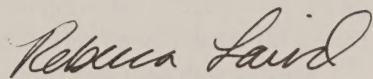
Tearing open that stack of manila and business-sized envelopes and finding a moving personal story of transformation or an article on a life-tested spiritual practice makes opening the mail a meaningful task. We've also noticed our mail increasingly includes personal prayer requests. Many of you are facing sickness, job transitions, and uncertain futures. We've heard your requests. Starting this month every Thursday from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. prayers will be offered on your behalf. Why don't you join us? If you live near Princeton, our meditation room will be open at this time. If you live at a distance, jot a note in your weekly calendar. As space allows, we will also list prayer requests to aid you in praying for others.



If you are facing a difficult time in your life, I want to share a story to affirm your faith that God is present in our suffering. Recently my friend John, a hospital chaplain, headed toward the oncology ward. As he walked down the hallway, he glanced into each room. He passed room 463 where nothing unusual was going on. He paused, started to walk by, then turned back feeling as if he'd been nudged, and entered the room. He greeted the woman patient, her husband, son, and mother. "She isn't going to live long--perhaps a day or two more" her mother explained. John prayed with the family and as they surrounded her bed, the woman abruptly took her last breath. John stayed with the family while doctors and loved ones were called. Much later as he began to leave, the son followed him outside and said, "I still believe in a loving God even though I'll never understand why God let my mom suffer for a year and a half. When I get to heaven that's the first thing I'm going to ask." That this young man chose faith even in a time of great suffering and confusion touched John. He had been lead into that room at just the right moment, both to accompany the family at the time of death and to provide a com-

passionate ear in the aftermath. "It's hard to understand why God would call someone like me into this work," he said. "All I know is that I was nudged into that room." As John's friend and a recipient of his kindness, I wasn't surprised that God had guided him, so I asked, "Why not you?" He shrugged and smiled, "It's hard to explain these things," he replied, "I guess that's simply why our best response is to say, 'I believe,' when we stand in the presence of the unknown."

This issue affirms God's presence in the daily problems and unknowns of life. Joan Borysenko speaks of the scientifically provable fact that cancer patients with social connections and belief in God get well faster than those without these same supports. Larry Dossey, M.D., reminds us that saints of all religious traditions find prayer frustrating from time to time. Barbara St. John recounts how a simple prayer led to fulfilling a lifelong dream. Carolyn Foote Edelmann tells of a pilgrimage to England to experience the mystery of an ancient friendship. Kathy McGrane finds her compassionate friends offer a view of the kind of God in which she can believe. Ted Kepes, Jr. discovers God in the "tiny whisper of silence" of a snowy morning. Robert O'Rourke offers advice on a prayerful way to detach ourselves from the fast-paced world of activity. Poets Edwin Bokert and Ralph Johnson speak respectively of why to "sit" in meditation and to sip joy in order to savor the best of life. Go well this month. And believe.



Rebecca Laird

Hope and Healing: The Work of Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.

JOYCE DAVIDSON AND REBECCA LAIRD

Joan Borysenko has a powerfully clear personal vision--to bring science, medicine, psychology, and spirituality together in the service of healing. Borysenko is co-founder of the Harvard Mind-Body Clinic at New England Deaconess Hospital, and author of the bestselling Minding the Body, Mending the Mind and Fire in the Soul: A New Psychology of Spiritual Optimism. She operates the Mind/Body Health Sciences, Inc. in Boulder, Colorado. Over the last few months, the authors attended several of her provocative public lectures and have distilled some of her eloquence and insight to share with you.

People who experience critical illness" says Joan Borysenko, "die to who they have been and are not yet reborn to who they will be. They are in the space between 'no longer and not yet.'" Borysenko has studied and learned from cancer patients for years and before that was a cell biologist who "chased around receptor cells to find out what made them metastasize." During this early period of her life, her father developed a type of leukemia and the cortisone treatment he underwent left him with a manic psychosis. She recalls, "all the lab knowledge in the world did not help me help my father." Indeed. During his rehabilitation period, her father committed suicide.

Walking with her father through the 'no longer and the not yet' led her to understand the profound crisis of meaning brought on by serious

Joyce Davidson, former managing editor of Country Inns magazine is pursuing graduate studies in thanatology. Rebecca Laird is the editor of FiP. We collectively heard Joan Borysenko speak several times in 1996 at the "A Passion For Life" Conference in Minneapolis and the Fourth Annual Governing Board Lecture Serious at the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center of the Morristown Memorial Health Foundation in New Jersey.

physical illness To quote Victor Frankl, "crisis without meaning equals despair." Those who struggle to find some meaning in their illnesses often find hope and sometimes healing. Those who succumb to self-blame and fatalism become awash in despair. Illness then is an opportunity for a "conversion from fear to love, from isolation to interconnectedness, and to an understanding of the universe as a friendly place." Said in another poetic way, "God is a mansion with many rooms and every room has a different key. But one key opens every room, and that key is a broken heart."

From her father's terrible tragedy and walking beside countless others battling cancers she has learned that "A cancer diagnosis is a dark night of the soul that marks a period of high suggestibility when even the little things become heightened. For instance, a receptionist's voice at the doctor's office is checked by the patient for little clues." The words of a chaplain or doctor by one's bedside becomes the information that one desperately needs to navigate through this new terrain of the soul. That's one reason why what we hear and sense at these times have a greater opportunity for impact--for good or for ill--than at other times when the world seems less foreign and unpredictable.

"During an illness people ask questions of meaning: Why am I here? Am I just a body? The chance for patients to talk about the meaning of their illnesses makes a huge difference in their ability to get well and to cope." Borysenko thinks the medical community needs to work collegially with pastoral care professionals. "Questions of mortality are important for people to face. If our bodies were simply a reflection of our minds, the saints would live forever, but they don't. Bernadette of Lourdes, who saw the Virgin at the healing spring died of bone cancer when she was in her thirties. While our mind and bodies are connected, and while the psycho-spiritual healing creates conditions that often can cure the physical body--nonetheless, the body dies at some time. We must be able to combine the wonderful medical technology we now have with the ability to talk of the Spirit if we want people to heal." Patients don't have to understand their illnesses or to answer the questions of why this tragedy befell them. It's the struggle for meaning that is essential.

In fact, Borysenko insists, "They eye goes blind when it only wants to see the why." Some questions never have answers, but asking the questions and seeking for truth still remains essential to the human task of healing.

What Borysenko espouses is not just positive thinking--it arises from an understanding of the integral way our bodies and minds are connected. She claims that "the body cannot tell the difference between what is happening to it and what it imagines is happening." So if you think you are dying, your body begins to react as if it were. That's why Borysenko is a strong proponent of what she terms, "mindfulness--the capacity to come into the present moment." If the body can't tell the difference between what is really happening and what is imagined, it is essential to pay attention to the messages we are sending to our bodies." Citing recent scientific research Borysenko claims that hopelessness and a sense of helplessness impair the immune system functions.

So then what, besides medication, boosts the immune system?

Borysenko suggests that "healing is living in a mindful, creative, forgiving way. Healing is right relationship, connectedness with our-



Tom Dunham

selves and others and there is another kind of healing--having a right relationship with God."

So one key component to healing is connectedness. "People stay alive to connect with others." This is a truism often overlooked by traditional medical treatment. Most of medical science's time is spent on "understanding the pathologies of disease rather than on the mechanics of healing." For example, "when we focus on heart disease, we focus on cholesterol levels and diets, but are we missing the boat by failing to look at social connectedness?" Research suggests she's on to something. Over a period of years the lifestyles of citizens of in a small town in Pennsylvania were studied for their significantly low incidence of heart disease. The scientists were especially interested in diet and exercise rates, but instead of finding people who adhered to healthy diets, these people ate lots of red meat and fats. But they did enjoy in abundance great social connections--if someone was sick a casserole would likely appear on his or her doorstep. A friend would stop by to check on how the patient was faring. Science verified that living in a web of positive social connections helps to keep people healthier. To corroborate this finding, studies of breast cancer patients show that women in support groups live twice as long as those not connected to a support system.

So healing happens, not just due to the miracles of modern medicine but through the cooperation of the mind, body, and spirit. And it must be clearly noted that healing is different from a cure. Sometimes people find healing and still die. Drawing from the work of Susanne Kobasa, Borysenko, outlines "The Three C's of Cure: Challenge--when you become ill can you perceive your illness as a challenge rather than a threat? Control--do you believe that you control your responses even when you can't control other aspects of your life or health? Commitment--Can you commit to the truth that you have a connection to a higher power? If so, you're on your way. You've done your part. Assures Borysenko, "Grace is like a seesaw, you only have to go halfway to tip it, the rest of the way is God's grace." □

A Prayer for Prayer

May we let prayer be.

May we allow it to follow
the infinite patterns of the human heart.
May we learn to practice the most difficult art,
the art of noninterference.

May we be guided by prayer
instead of attempting to guide prayer.
May we allow prayer to be what it needs to be,
to be what it is.

May we let prayer be.

Larry Dossey, M.D.

Overcoming Ambivalence and Confusion About Prayer

LARRY DOSSEY, M.D.

We know that prayer is good for us and for others. Why then is praying so hard? Why do we avoid taking time to pray? Larry Dossey takes an honest look at our negative attitudes toward prayer so that we may re-discover prayer "that is as spontaneous and natural as the dawn."

Many a Christian prays faintly, lest God might really hear him, which he, poor man, never intended," C.S. Lewis once said. Fear of results is one type of negative thinking about prayer. There are many others.

Millions feel that prayer is drudgery, but they do it anyway because they fear punishment if they don't. Others feel guilty or selfish about praying for themselves. They seem to sense that Emerson was right when he said that most prayer was an exercise in meanness and theft. Some people feel that prayer is downright arrogant: Who am I to tell the Universe how to behave? Many of our ambivalent attitudes toward prayer stem from childhood. Prayer, we learned, usually involves talking aloud or silently, usually at some length, to a wizened, no-nonsense male god who is listening intently to make sure we get it right and that we pray on schedule. No wonder we are ambivalent about prayer!

Negative attitudes toward prayer are often unconscious, because we tell ourselves that prayer is a good thing and we ought to enjoy praying.

Larry Dossey, M.D. is author of Prayer is Good Medicine and executive editor of the journal, Alternative Therapies. Pages 88, 124-135 from Prayer is Good Medicine by Larry Dossey, M.D. Copyright 1996 by Larry Dossey, M.D. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Unable to confront these negative feelings, we repress them into the unconscious part of the mind, where they continue to frustrate us when we pray.

Professing to love what we dislike, of course, is not limited to prayer. Millions of people exercise vigorously and eat sensibly, hating every minute of it. Orson Wells once said that there is more virtue in a man who eats caviar on impulse than in someone who eats Grapenuts on principle. The caviar eater is following his heart; the Grapenuts eater, his rigid sense of duty. So with prayer. The person who prays rarely but out of heartfelt desire is expressing greater genuineness than someone who prays compulsively by the clock.

When we do acknowledge our ambivalent attitudes toward prayer, we often fall into self-reproach: "If only I were more spiritually mature, I wouldn't feel this way!" The result is often to try even harder to "like" prayer. This approach doesn't work because it reinforces the negative attitudes one is trying to resolve.

Four steps can help us resolve our negative attitudes toward prayer:

- *Stop taking our prayer life so seriously.*

When I find myself taking my own prayer and meditation too seriously--feeling as if I should be more disciplined and "pray better"--I remind myself that I am still learning. I also keep two sayings at hand that invariably help me to lighten up and put things in perspective: G.K. Chesterton's observation, "Anything worth doing is worth doing badly," and the old witticism, "How do you make God laugh? Tell him your plans." Comments such as these can remind us of something we often forget: The Universe doesn't depend on whether or not we get it right in prayer.

- *Realize that negative attitudes toward prayer are universal.*

The saints and mystics of all the great religions have grumbled about prayer from time to time. Like us, they found it difficult to stay on track in prayer, and they lamented their weakness. Confessing his shortcomings during prayer, John Donne said, "I throw myself down

in my chamber . . . and invite God and his Angels hither, and when they are there, I neglect God for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door.”

If we sometimes feel like failures at prayer, we are in good company.

- *Remember that there are many types of prayer and a great many ways of praying.*

If we're having trouble with one method, we should explore others. If “asking” prayers--prayers of petition and intercession--do not feel appropriate, we might consider focusing instead on other types, such as prayers of adoration, celebration, or thanksgiving. For most people, these prayers feel lighter. They can help us resuscitate our prayer life when it is in the gutter of joyless duty.

- *Recall that prayer is not just a matter of doing but also a way of being.*

As Dorothy Day put it, “Does God have a set way of prayer, a way that he expects each of us to follow? I doubt it. I believe some people--lots of people--pray through the witness of their lives, through the work they do, the friendships they have, the love they offer people and receive from people. Since when are words the only acceptable form of prayer?”

Prayer can take the form of prayerfulness--an attitude, a state of mind in which we feel a sacred connection with the Absolute. Prayerfulness bypasses the bowed head and the bent knee and all the *thees* and *thous*. It exists not just in church but also while mowing the lawn or washing dishes or driving kids to soccer practice. Through prayerfulness we can help heal our negative attitudes toward ritualized, formal prayer. In prayerfulness, sacred feelings arise naturally from the depths of our being, like a clear spring surfacing on a mountain slope. Prayerfulness can lead us back, full circle, to prayer, but prayer transformed, prayer that is as spontaneous and natural as the dawn. ▣

Apache Christ

BARBARA SAINT JOHN

An icon opens doors to meet a musical role model for this New York singer/songwriter and dream analyst.

One night, while on vacation, I had the following dream:

I dream that country music stars Emmylou Harris and Rhonda Vincent are at the bottom of a steep rock decline. I am up above, and they are encouraging me to come down to be with them, but I am a little hesitant, as I'm a little afraid. I really want to jump down, almost do, but hesitate. The jagged rocks are frightening, and I'm afraid I'll hurt myself. Somehow, I get down safely to where they are, and Emmylou Harris embraces me warmly. She's just holding me in a very loving, accepting way. I wake up feeling very affirmed and happy.

Soon after I had this dream, Emmylou Harris, an artist whose work I admire tremendously, was to perform at the Beacon Theater in New York City. I eagerly planned to go.

I'm in the habit of giving people Robert Lentz holy icon cards, because I think they are beautiful and uplifting to the "post-modern soul," and before I left the house to go to the concert, I shuffled through the cards hoping to choose one Emmylou might like. I chose



Barbara Saint John's second CD, entitled "Emily" (after the New England poetess Emily Dickinson), was recorded in Nashville, TN, and received substantial airplay across the country. Barbara was a Kerrville, Texas New Folk Finalist in 1996. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Lentz's "Apache Christ"; in it Christ wears a headband, much like the one Daniel Lanois, Emmylou's former band leader, often wore.

On the subway, I managed to scratch "To Emmylou Haris--from Barbara Saint John" on the back of the holy card. I wanted her to have it that evening, but I wasn't quite sure why.

The performance was outstanding. I found myself crying, tears streaming down my cheeks, as Emmylou sang spiritual songs, proclaiming her faith in an aesthetic and artistic manner of the highest caliber. As I listened, I thought, "Here are two people, Emmylou and Daniel, who are not ashamed to sing about Jesus, heaven, and being reunited with their loved ones once again at the end of this often trial-filled pilgrimage."

In the lobby after the show, I inquired if Emmylou would have a "meet-and-greet" for fans, as she often does. The stagehand asked me if I had a pass. I said no. Could he help me find a way to meet Emmylou so that she could autograph the 8x10 photo that I had with me? He directed me to the backstage entrance of the theater on 74th Street.

I decided to pray. "Lord, I don't know why I'm standing here and I feel ridiculous." I also threw in a little plea to my guardian angel.

There I found a group of about ten hopeful souls. I stood for a while, making small talk with the bouncers guarding the backstage door. They were letting nobody in. "This is a lost cause," I thought, disappointed. One of the bouncers saw the photo mailer I was holding. I showed the 8x10 of Emmylou, then I showed him the "Apache Christ" holy icon card, and told him I wanted to meet her to give it to her, in appreciation for the beautiful, spiritual music. One of the other bouncers saw it as well, and I could tell that they were touched, or made thoughtful by it, somehow.

After waiting for twenty minutes or so, I decided to pray. "Lord, I don't know why I'm standing here and I feel ridiculous, but please make a way for me to give this to Emmylou." I also threw in a little plea to my guardian angel.

A few minutes later, the bouncers were ordered to close the doors. The group outside moaned. I turned and left.

I walked toward the subway entrance, and at 73rd Street and Broadway, I walked right into a scene being shot for a major movie. "Excuse me, Miss, can you stay right where you are?. . .Wait, back up, to here". . .a crew member exhorted. "It'll just be a few minutes."

I stood pondering New York life until someone yelled "Cut!" Then I passed through the thick, lingering crowd, threw my head back to catch a last glimpse of the theater marquee, and suddenly, I came to a complete halt. A voice inside my head so "Go back. You will meet her."

I made an about-face toward the backstage entrance. One of the bouncers saw me and teased me, saying, "We were talking about you the whole time you were gone." "All good things," I responded in kind. I watched the road crew pack the bus. In a moment, the bouncer to whom I had previously shown the icon surreptitiously motioned for me to come to the door. He guided me through the door, and a folded guest pass was pressed in my hand. "Here. It was for the owner of the building, but he didn't show up," he proudly informed me.

The inner knowing that this opened door was providential rushed through me, and I found myself excitedly blessing the three young men. "God bless you, oh, thank you so much! I know that God will bless you richly for this."

I climbed the first flight of stairs. The room seemed empty, but I heard voices coming from above, so I went up to the next floor. A pleasant man greeted me at the landing and began making small talk about the silver equestrian pin I was wearing; he loved horses. Soon, however, my attention wavered, and I asked him where Emmylou was.

“She’s right up there,” he said, pointing to the next flight of stairs.

I crept up gingerly, shyly, and as quietly as a church mouse. Halfway up the steps, I popped my head up like a telescope to try and locate her in the room. Daniel Lanois spotted me and a wide grin appeared across his face. As I ascended to the top of the stairs, he motioned to Emmylou and said “There’s someone here for you.” I recognized Emmylou’s mop of silver-grey hair and suddenly she stopped, turned around, and with a beautiful smile said “Hello!” in a kind and friendly way.

Quaking at the knees, I suddenly felt seven years old, and felt my heart stick in my throat. I managed to ask her to sign the 8x10 and told her it was the best concert of hers I’d ever seen. “You were great.” As she handed back the autographed picture, I lifted it up to reveal the holy card hidden underneath. “This is for you!” I said. A woman standing next to her cooed, “Ooh. . .that’s nice!” Then Emmylou thanked me warmly. I was too nervous to say anything else, so I thanked her and turned to go.

As I descended the last flight of stairs triumphantly waving my autographed picture, I met the bouncer who gave me the pass. “Mission accomplished!” I blurted. As I peeled the pass off my coat to give it back to him, he said, “No, you can keep it--don’t you want to keep it?”

I stuck it on the back of the 8x10. “You know, you created good karma for yourself tonight,” I told him. “I know. I believe in that,” he replied with conviction. “So do I,” I said.

We can have visitation experiences of many kinds, but to actually hear the voice of God in guiding me to meet my favorite recording artist was a first for me. Even when outward circumstances seemed bleak, I was again reminded that God hears my prayers and was willing to break into seemingly ordinary affairs, simply to make me happy. ▣

These prayers are taken from Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans, recently published by HarperCollins. In the introduction editor James Melvin Washington writes, "Prayer is an attempt to count the stars of our souls. Under its sacred canopy, an oratory of hope echoes the vast but immediate distances of who we are and who we want to be."

I Let Go of My Accumulations

My ego is like a fortress.
I have built its walls
stone by stone
To hold out the invasion
of the love of God.
But I have stayed here long
enough. There is light.
Over the barriers. O my God--
The darkness of my house
forgive
and overtake my soul.
I relax the barriers.
I abandon all that I think I am,
All that I hope to be,
All that I believe I possess.
I let go of the past,
I withdraw my grasping hand
from the future,
And in the great silence of this
moment,

I alertly rest my soul.
As the sea gull lays in the
wind current,
So I lay myself into the spirit
of God.
My dearest human
relationships,
My most precious dreams,
I surrender to His care.
All that I have called my own
I give back. All my favorite
things
Which I would withhold in my
storehouse
From his fearful tyranny,
I let go.
I give myself
Unto Thee, O my God.
Amen.

Howard Thurman

Howard Thurman (1900-1981) was founder of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco and dean of the chapel at Howard and Boston Universities.



Robert F. Campbell

A Prayer for a Positive Attitude

Now great God, give us thy power to believe in ourselves, and in what we can do, and in what we can be, and in what we are. May the grace of Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

Leon H. Sullivan

A Prayer for Endurance

In the midst of life and deeds it is easy to have endurance and strength and determination, but Thy Word, O Lord, teaches us, that this is not enough to bring good to the world--to bring happiness and the worthier success. For *this* we must endure to the end--learn to finish things-- to bring them to accomplishment and full fruition. We must not be content with plans, ambitions, and resolves; with part of a message or part of an education, but be set and determined to fulfill the promise and complete the task and secure the full training. Such men and women alone does God save by lifting them above and raising them to higher worlds and wider prospects. Give us then, O God, to resist today the temptation of shirking, and the grit to endure to the end. Amen.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois

Leon H. Sullivan is pastor emeritus of the Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia, PA.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) has been called the most influential African-American intellectual and author of the twentieth century. His most well-known book, The Souls of Black Folk, is a classic.

Mysteries of St. Nectan's Glen

CAROLYN FOOTE EDELMANN

Britain's legendary King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table have inspired countless intrepid pilgrims to join their search for the Grail--the long-lost chalice Jesus drank from at the Last Supper. Two present-day pilgrims, Carolyn Foote Edelmenn and Darlene Prestbo find inspiration at St. Nectan's Glen, a secluded Arthurian spot where abiding friendships flourish.

I had forgotten how weather rules in Cornwall. Gale and fog and downpour worked their will throughout our attempts to retrace King Arthur's Quest. My travelling companion, Darlene, and I were required to tromp bogs and moors, frequently blinded by weather worse than any legendary Avalon mists. Nonetheless, we made our pilgrims' way. In search of our king and his ideals, I drove and she navigated from Glastonbury to Tintagel to Slaughter Bridge in Camelford. We twined down the muddy lane to Dozmary Pool where Excalibur was ritually plunged. We trudged up the steep and ancient heights where Arthur's father, the Pendragon, slew his rival, Gorlois, thus legitimizing the king-who-was, king-who-shall-be.

On our next-to-last day, we headed toward St. Nectan's Glen. Not far from Arthur's birthplace, Tintagel, lies the wooded valley of St. Nectan. The place is awash in mystery. It was Darlene's major destination, for she was determined to write an epic poem about the two

Carolyn Foote Edelmenn holds the William Carlos Williams Poetry Prize from the Paterson Library. Carolyn leads writing and poetry workshops. She lives and works in Princeton, NJ.

mysterious ladies who once inhabited the Glen. I was interested in their saga, but not so driven, although the Glen's ferny enclaves did sound appealing after nine days in Cornwall's rocky harshness. We both sensed an Arthurian connection somewhere in the Glen. But, so far, none of our research had revealed it.

I was weary of wandering in inclement weather. Upon the eve of our St. Nectan's crusade, I delivered an ultimatum to Darlene: "Sun for the Glen, or we don't go." She smiled her Mona Lisa smile and went back to reading about the enigmatic women of the Glen. Daphne duMaurier spelled out their story convincingly yet inconclusively. The ladies had lived out their very private lives in the Glen within sound of a legendary waterfall. Glen neighbors had long been suspicious of this hermetic pair, whispering "witchcraft" and worse. Nonetheless, no stock perished from odd causes, no milk soured within the ladies' purlieu--those ancient proofs of black magic proved nothing. The Glen women are said to have subsisted on fish from the stream and local berries. A weekly streamside trek to the village provided their sole contact with other humans, their only opportunity for a change of diet.

We took turns sipping the darkling water with solemnity. I prayed that this sacred water would open our eyes to the right path to the Glen.

So lived the two, in uneasy truce with the town, over many years. Then, one day, people realized that it had been some weeks since anyone had laid eyes on either of the Glen residents. A search party was dispatched to the distant dwelling. One of the recluses recently had died. Her survivor sat still as stone in the bedside chair, keeping a lonely vigil. No word nor sound came from the grieving woman, not even as townspeople removed her companion's body. Not long thereafter, a wandering child discovered the second death. 'Tis said the survivor had let no food pass her lips since her hour of loss.

As luck would have it, dawn came relatively clear. We returned, first to Tintagel-town, where I asked the purveyor of clotted cream for directions to St. Nectan's. "Oh, you *cannot* go there now!" the woman replied with a gasp. "'Tis owned and 'tis closed . . . up for sale. Perhaps someday, someone right will buy it." Wrapping my purchases, this woman was practically in tears. And I was not far behind as I considered breaking such news to Darlene.

She took it characteristically: "We'll go anyway."

In these remote areas, our maps--although the vaunted Ordnance Survey--tended to be of little use. All we knew of St. Nectan's Glen was that it lay somewhere between Bossiney and the sea. We parked at a Bossiney hostelry and we made our way on foot up the gravel roadway, coming suddenly upon a sacred well. Here, the reclusive St. Piran had healed locals, at the edge of a wood across from the padlocked church that now bears his name. We took turns sipping the darkling water with solemnity. I prayed that this sacred water would open our eyes to the right path to the Glen.

Just then, two older British women greeted us, sporting tweeds and weatherproof caps, bearing wrinkled maps. They looked like experts. For I was, frankly, fed up with not knowing the way to famous places. After lengthy and seemingly fruitless discussion, the British walkers took the high road. We set off to the right through pastures redolent of cows. The farther Darlene and I walked, the more suburban our surroundings became. Overhead, the sun played hide and seek (mostly hide), not alleviating my mood. Darlene tromped steadily, merrily forward.

Then, at the end of a bungalow row, two plumbers were breaking for lunch, their tin pails swinging heartily. Darlene inquired the way to the Glen, miraculously to be told, "Straight on!" Soon everything was green and sodden. The trail was thick with leaves, a far cry from barren Bodmin Moor. Our way was walled with ancient stones furred with moss and lichen. These enclaves fairly reeked of faery folk. We could sense where the little ones would watch by night, dance, and hold convocations.

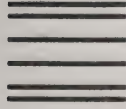
Darlene headed purposefully toward the rocky streambed. In her day-pack she had brought along wrapped breakfast scones. Darlene explained that wee folk feel neglected in these harsh times, that human compassion warms their hearts. Darlene cleared a space to form a ring of stones, a faery Stonehenge, then arranged her gift with precision upon the darkest, glossiest slab. I walked on, leaving her to her wordless incantations.

The Glen's silence was cacophonous. Not even the trill of a bird intruded. We resumed our trek as though vowed to silence. Suddenly, we encountered another voyager coming from the direction of the ladies' dwelling. The towering hulk of a man wore a black-and-white-striped jersey right out of *The Pirates of Penzance*. His hair was dark as Cornish slate in rain, matching his lively eyes. His right hand skillfully wielded a stout stick. In his right ear glittered a single earring. His greeting was kind, almost fond. We wished one another well; then he marched townward.

Soon we were slipping and sliding up a steep slope, grabbing at vines, encountering notices that absolutely forbade "trespassing." So the lady at the creamery had been correct. I began to retreat. Darlene lifted her chin: "The ladies would *want* us here," she insisted, forging ahead. The sound of the waterfall insistently lured us. Hidden among roots, we stumbled onto an overgrown foundation. Darlene stepped across the threshold. It was as if one of the ladies had extended a hand to help her in. Hushed, my friend knelt.

"Carolyn, look--surely this is where the ladies lived! See, here is their hearth!" In truth, this viney enclave felt the right size and age. The place exuded a palpable coziness. Deaths or no deaths, here was nothing sad. Darlene was, obviously, at home. I, however, felt restless, intrusive.

Stepping "outdoors," (for *all* was open to the sky), I discovered worn walkways, other entries, even a kind of outdoor space where two might have sat to watch what sun might filter through. I tried to focus on their happier times. But it was hard to keep my mind off the long watch of the survivor, her increasing frenzy as her loss became more and more inevitable.



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

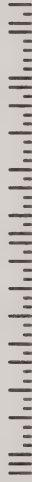
BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

First Class Permit No. 50 Princeton, N.J.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-9946



The suggested donation for a year of *Fellowship in Prayer* is \$16.00. Many readers, however, send more than that amount as a way of becoming a “Spiritual Friend” to those unable to contribute (especially men and women in hospitals, nursing and old age homes, and religious institutions).

In addition to sending in your own contribution and request to receive *FIP*, won’t you become a “Spiritual Friend” to someone in need? You will earn their lasting gratitude—and ours.

☐ I enclose \$16.00 (\$22.00 for foreign subscriptions). Please send *FIP* to me:

(name) _____

(street) _____

(city, state, zip) _____

☐ Renewal

☐ New Listing

☐ I enclose \$ _____. Please send a gift subscription to:

(name) _____

(street) _____

(city, state, zip) _____

☐ I enclose \$ _____. Please send *FIP* to someone in need, or use it to promote the practice of prayer and meditation.

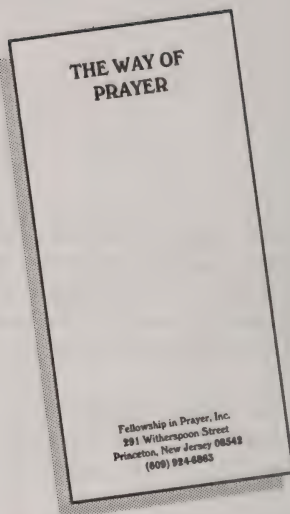
☐ Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Please use the back of this sheet for your comments.

The Way of Prayer answers the questions of many readers who have asked us specific questions about prayer: When, where, and how to pray; what to pray for; what you can expect from prayer; how to form a prayer group.

Copies are \$2.00 each. Now in its 3rd printing, *The Way of Prayer* has clearly filled a widely-felt need.

☐ Please send me _____ copies of *The Way of Prayer*. I enclose my check for \$ _____.



* * * * *

What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

Darlene and I spent a long and reverent time among the ruins of St. Nectan's Glen. The courage of women enthralled us. How they defied convention! How they lived their loyalty! In that hush, the beat of weighty wings stunned us both. "Merlin!" I whispered/shouted: "He always sends birds." "Has to be an owl," Darlene assented, awe in each simple word. "What else could be that ponderous?" To hear Merlin's owl, in daylight! A miracle of the Glen.

We ultimately left the ladies' sanctuary on leaden feet. Our path had gifts for us--crisp new feathers of birds we'd neither seen nor heard. Mine were dark, matching my earlier mood. Darlene's feathers were of pristine whiteness. As she stooped to gather them, she confided, "I always think faery wings look like this."

Driving back, I puzzled, "Isn't it odd that we had such an intense experience in there, but it didn't have anything to do with Arthur?" "I bet it *does*," she declared. The next morning, as I was slathering my scone with cream, Darlene exultantly burst into the cottage's enormous sea-rimmed kitchen. "Guess what?" I shook my head and poured her tea. "I was reading the pamphlets I picked up in the church at Tintagel last night. And I found it!" The Glen *does* have an Arthur-connection! It's the place where his knights made pilgrimage, kept vigil before quests!"

St. Nectan, first hermit of the Glen, had been sought out to give blessing to each devout cavalier. Arthur himself might have knelt in the verdant shrine. Perhaps some residue of that fortitude remained in the air, buttressing the ladies of the Glen in times of joy and tribulation. Our trip now felt complete. Darlene and I would return to our everyday world which holds us in reluctant thrall, grateful heirs to all the magic of the Glen. □

Finding God Within Ourselves

ROBERT O'ROURKE

Practicing Centering Prayer allows us to stop and allow God to take care of things. Why not try it today?

One of my favorite stories concerns a day when Jesus was passing by with a throng of people following along the way. Among them was a woman beset by a long-term, chronic ailment. Her desire: to touch Jesus and be made well and whole again! Such was her faith, her hope, her love for the Master. As the crowd jostled her about, she lunged in desperation toward Jesus but was only able to touch the fringe of his robe. It was enough. In tenderness and compassion Jesus spoke to her:

*Daughter, it is your faith that has cured you.
Go in peace and be free of this illness.*

(Mark 5:34)

Many of us are buffeted by the events of life, lost in a crowd and out of touch with Jesus. Yet sometimes these very pressing events of life move us toward Jesus. Perhaps, as in the case of this lone woman, an illness makes us aware of our dependence on God. Or feelings of emptiness and despair may cause us once more to hunger and thirst for the friendship of God. With even the smallest amount of faith left in us we can still reach out to Jesus with the realization that all the while he has been there waiting for us to open the doors of our lives to him.

Robert O'Rourke, well known by FiP readers for his Rock Ritual series, is a Colorado writer, poet, and folk artist. This article was adapted from "Centering Prayer," a leaflet distributed by Dove Publications, Pecos, NM 87552. Used by permission.



Darlene Prestbo

Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him, and he with me.

(Rev. 3:20)

Meeting Jesus Within

One way to open that door to Jesus is through Centering Prayer, a method of finding God within ourselves. Jesus promised that his Spirit “remains with you and will be within you.” We move toward that center of our being in faith seeking God and God alone . . . not God’s gifts: peace, quiet, tranquility, forgiveness, healing, or wisdom . . . nothing for ourselves except God’s loving Presence. In so doing we put aside all thoughts, feelings, desires, imaginings that stand in our way of being totally with God. Our single, dominant desire is to wait for God and, perhaps for the first time, obey Jesus’ new commandment to love God

*with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all your strength.*

(Mark 12:30)

When has our desire been, above all else, the Presence and Friendship of God?

Father Thomas Keating introduced me to this practical method of contemplative Centering Prayer; and Father Basil Pennington in his book, *Daily We Touch Him*, helped me further understand the experience of finding God within myself. It is a method quite simple to explain but one that depends upon personal experience for full appreciation.

If you desire and need a practical way to respond to God, I invite you to consider this method. Try it for 30 days and if you decide it does

not satisfy you then, gently set it aside. If it produces good fruit, thank God!

Four Simple Steps

1. Upon entering prayer, take a few minutes to quiet and relax your body, and then move in faith to God dwelling in the center of your being.
2. Choose a single, sacred word that expresses for you the fullness of God. Begin to repeat this word inwardly.
3. Whenever your mind wanders or becomes aware of anything else, gently return to your sacred word.
4. After 15-20 minutes quietly reenter the world, asking God to remain with you and make God's Presence known. By mentally praying the "Our Father" the transition is gracefully accomplished.

One of the first things we need to do in all forms of meditation and prayer is to detach ourselves from the fast-paced world of activity and follow God's simple invitation:

*Be still
and know
that I am God.*

(Ps. 46:10)

I chuckle each time I remember Father Keating saying, "Centering Prayer is a good method for closing our mouths. God has been listening to us for years."

Father Pennington, in similar good humor, says that once or twice each day we can stop our frenetic activity and allow God to take care of things. We can, he believes, trust God to manage the world for a few minutes each day while we meditate. God won't mess things up too much without us!

Thus, in Centering Prayer, we are asked to stop all activity, quiet

our minds and relax our bodies. We can, in so doing, respond to another invitation of Jesus:

*Come to me,
all who are weary and
find life burdensome and
I will refresh you.
Take my yoke upon your shoulders
and learn from me, for
I am gentle and humble of heart.
Your souls will find rest.*

(Matt. 11:28)

For the next 20 minutes we wait on God. God's Presence is made possible by silence. We ask nothing more than friendship with God. Without striving we rest in God. We peacefully abide in God.

To facilitate our remaining with God we choose a single word which, for us, exemplifies our love of God. "Jesus," "Father," "Peace," are examples of our faith and love. We then let this single word repeat itself within us, thus focusing our thought entirely on God.

A Sacred Word

Be prepared for an onrush of thoughts. All kinds of thoughts: good, bad, great ideas, wonderful revelations, sweet images, gross fabrications. Thoughts just have a persistent way of grabbing our attention. Seldom in our waking day are we ever free of thoughts. They cascade around our brains. Usually they are ideas about unfinished business: guilt, fear, desire, anger, love. As they surface, simply let them flow by and gently return to your chosen sacred word. (We do not constantly repeat this word as in a mantra but only when other thoughts seek to pull us back into an anxious world.) As a result of returning to your sacred word, you slow down the onrush of many thoughts by focusing on one. As you do this, tension begins to flow out of your life.

In time, you will experience fewer of these intrusions and have more time for the uninterrupted Presence of God.

There is still another blessing of Centering Prayer. Many of us are uncertain of how we should pray. This is not a unique problem because even the disciples asked the Master *how* to pray. The assurance we have in Centering Prayer is this:

The Spirit . . . helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us . . . He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, for the Spirit intercedes . . . as God wills.

(Rom. 8:26)

I believe there have been subtle, positive changes in my way of thinking and behaving after only a few months of Centering Prayer. This, I feel confident, will be your experience too.

At the close of each prayer session I thank God for being with me. I ask God to continue with me throughout the day, and I thank God each time I am aware of God's Presence. I notice God slipping into my moments more and more--or is it me slipping into God's Ever-Presence? No matter. We meet! □

Grace is the most powerful force in the universe. It can transcend repression, addiction, and every other internal or external power that seeks to oppress the human heart. Grace is where our hope lies.

Gerald May

Late have I loved You, O Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved You: for behold You were within me, and I outside; and I sought You outside and in my unloveliness fell upon those lovely things that you have made. You were with me, and I was not with You. I was kept from You by those things. Yet had they not been in You, they would not have been at all. You called and cried to me to break open my deafness: and You sent forth Your beams to shine upon me and chase away my blindness: You breathed fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath and do now long for you: I tasted You, and now hunger and thirst for You: You touched me, and I burned for Your peace.

Augustine of Hippo

BLESSINGS

Bless what you were
Bless all your dreams then.

Bless who you are
Bless what you hold now

Bless what you will be
Bless what your hopes are

Bless.

M. Lynn Baquie

Compassionate Presence

KATHY A. McGRANE

Asking the question: Who is God? leads to another penetrating query: Who am I?

I have spent much of the last couple of years searching for a God I can believe in. I have raged against the all-powerful miracle worker, apparently asleep on the job. I have become disgusted with the detached parent who, supposedly out of respect for our free will, sits silently in the bleachers while we destroy one another. I cannot stomach the almighty, white Father-in-heaven used by priests, preachers, and politicians to defend the status quo. Even the idea of a just God, who will judge all according to their actions in the end, seems of little relevance in the here and now. And while the God I relate to is, more often than not, feminine in nature, I have not found a way to connect with the goddesses of ancient times.

It would simplify my life tremendously if I could dismiss God as a created reality, but unbelief has been impossible for me. A deep yearning for God and fleeting experiences of graced presence give my life meaning, energy, and direction.

Recently, I've begun to come to terms with a God who is mystery and paradox, beyond my control and understanding. I also know, however, that if I am to take seriously the notion that God is immanent as well as transcendent, I need to move from my head into my heart. I need to take a look at my life and spend some time with the question,

Originally from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Kathy McGrane currently lives in El Paso, TX. She works at Cristo Rey Centro Luterano, and in her free time enjoys reading, writing, walking, playing her guitar, bike rides, and good conversation.

“Who is the God I have come to know?” (A process substantially different from that of railing against the many “gods” who no longer ring true to my experience.)

Author Marcus Borg affirms this for me in his book *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* when he writes that the Christian life is not primarily about believing, but rather about entering into a relationship with that to which the Christian tradition points, which may be spoken of as God. He says that God, rather than being an article of belief, becomes an experiential reality.

How can I describe my experience of this God? She is consistently present, even as I curse her apparent absence. She loves me and believes in me, even when I am filled with self-hatred. She beckons me beyond my carefully constructed comfort zones into situations of pain and poverty without any solutions. She breathes life and hope into a world filled with hatred and division.

How can I describe my experience of this God?

Her name is compassion. Her gift is presence. She is the friend who sat with me in the chapel one morning during a very difficult time. I found it painful to be in God’s presence and impossible to pray. Yet her presence and willingness just to be with me was, in retrospect, a profound experience of being cared for. She is another friend and co-worker who, after frequently seeing me obsessed as I tried to solve the quirks of our computer, one day said, “Let it be.” And is yet another friend who frequently asks, “How are you doing?” And really wants to know.

She is strength on my good days, allowing me to set aside my workaholic tendencies to be present, love, laugh, and celebrate--sunrises, surprises, silence, and good food. She is the tears that well up in my eyes as I silently listen to the story of another’s pain and courage. She is the embrace that says, “I have no answers, but I am with you.” She

comes to me tenderly in the midst of intense, perfectionistic frenzies and whispers (even when I'm not ready to hear it) "Lighten up! Don't be so hard on yourself!" She comforts, soothes, and holds me in moments of sadness, loneliness, fear, and frustration.

I am growing ever more convinced that the God I experience is the God I am called to incarnate. A God of compassionate presence is desperately needed in this messed-up, hurting world. At the same time, I find it somewhat ironic and very humbling that I, impatient critic that I am, should be called to such a role. Maybe the questions I need to be asking are not so much about who God is, but rather about who I am, and who I am called to become. □



Peter G. Haskell

Silent Retreat

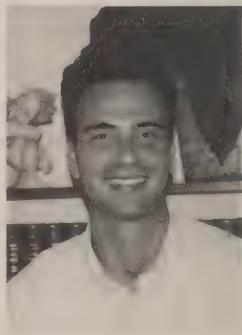
TED KEPES, JR.

Immersed in graduate studies, this student finds extended silence to be a friend of the soul and a foe of his fears.

In the depths of winter, I left for Cohasset, Massachusetts to spend five days in silent retreat at the Bellarmine retreat house. The retreat was attended by twenty graduate students and faculty of theology in the Boston area.

Except for listening to classical music during meals, morning and evening prayer, afternoon mass, and a brief daily meeting with our spiritual director, we were in complete silence for five days.

During an intensified period of prayer and contemplation in preparation for this retreat I had felt an increasing invitation to surrender myself, my life, my struggles, my frustrations, my desires, my hopes, my joys, my dreams, my disappointments, and everything I experienced life to be to God--it is an invitation which I would gratefully come to accept during the course of the retreat. I hope the following selection from my retreat journal is able to convey something of the wonder and joy of my spiritual experience during this precious time of silence.



Ted Kepes, Jr. lives in Brighton, MA where he is working on his Ph.D. in theology at Boston College. He eventually hopes to become a professor and writer. When he is not busy with school work, he enjoys praying, listening to music, taking walks, writing, reading, playing the guitar and singing.

Tuesday 7:00 p.m.

After a refreshing hour-long drive through the mountains of new snow which has blanketed the area, I arrived. The beautifully rustic retreat house is set in a thickly wooded area next to the ocean about twenty miles south of Boston. There is a wonderful stillness and beauty here which is intensified by the icy ocean, the barren trees, the snow, and the quiet darkness of winter. We have just enjoyed dinner together and are about to formally begin our retreat into silence.

Wednesday 11:40 a.m.

I feel at peace this morning but am also filled with a growing fear of losing myself in the incomprehensibility and wilderness of God to whom I am becoming more and more open. Am I fearing the loss of self which must precede the discovery of one's true self?

I am experiencing the tension between wanting to accept the loving call of God who desires me fully and unconditionally, and my own fear of moving into God's mystery. I pray for the ability to trust God today. I must remember God knows me much better than I know myself. For those of us who have been abused by those who have been in control of our lives it is especially difficult to give up our own control. But this is precisely what God is asking me to do and I am going to do everything I can to let go. "Lord, please catch me."

2:20 p.m.

As I took a wonderful hour-long walk this afternoon through yet another snowstorm, my fears of losing myself in God were eased. I realized that while God may remain incomprehensible, there are many expressions of the meaning and character of God throughout the world, religious traditions, sacred texts, and in the writings of the many who have journeyed on before us. As a Christian, I can encounter God in the particular and historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, in scripture, in the tradition, and in the loving presence of others and myself. I may not know personally right now that the journey into the mystery of God is safe, but I can trust those who have gone on ahead of me--Jesus, the

saints, the mystics. I can also trust that quiet voice deep within--“be not afraid.”

7:08 p.m.

Once again I have found great comfort and reassurance in the writings of St. John of the Cross. The beginning of his *Spiritual Cantic* speaks directly to my heart. John suggests that the closer we move toward God, the more absent God appears to be. The fact that God cannot be grasped with the senses or the mind results in the experience of sensory and intellectual darkness as long as we attempt to use these faculties to grasp God. It is like trying to smell a flower with our ears, or see a sunset with our nose.

John counsels again and again not to worry that our senses and intellect cannot grasp God and insists that it will seem to these very limited abilities that there is nothing there to be grasped. But this is the case not because of the absence of God, but because of the bewildering closeness and extent of God’s presence. It is like a fish who tries to find the ocean by looking at rocks and seaweed. God is all around us, everywhere, in everything.

Although I only slept for several hours last night, I am full of energy, joy, peace, hope, thanksgiving, and love. It is remarkable that after just one day here, I feel so much closer to the others and to the whole of creation. Being quiet among others is a bit unusual at first but I have quickly realized that solitude is among the greatest gifts we can give to one another. To respect the solitude of another is to affirm and respect the awesome presence of the spirit which is at the heart of who we are.

Thursday 11:16 a.m.

As I continue to quiet myself in reading, reflection, and deep prayer, I feel myself slowly moving more and more beyond the narrow confines of myself. The reassurance I have received from John of the Cross has helped me to feel more at ease in continuing to open myself up to the immense depth, meaning, wisdom, and love of God, who is infinite and

and all present. I am increasingly filled with deep peace, joy, consolation, and have a growing sense of profound reverence for God and the whole of creation.

3:17 p.m.

Another wonderful walk. In contrast to the gray and snow of yesterday, there is bright sunshine today radiating through fresh, crisp air. The powdery white snow, green pines, and blue ocean and sky reveal a beauty which I found almost too much to bear. As I become more and more open to the majesty of God, I am growing in my appreciation of the whole of creation.

It was so appropriate that I spent the morning praying over the principle and foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola. He suggests that the human person was created for the sole purpose of offering praise, reverence, and service to God. Creation, including humanity, is not something for us to use for our own personal pleasure or gain, but is the very expression of God which ought to be praised, revered, and served.



Darlene Prestbo

Friday 9:00 a.m.

As I enter the third day of silence, I note that I am beginning to feel some withdrawal pains from the world. There is clearly an emptiness that has opened up which had previously been filled with the chatter and busyness of life.

I am really starting to become aware of the awesome presence of silence. Looking at the quiet winter stillness last evening and early this morning filled me with butterflies. The great stillness, peace, and simplicity of the presence of God in creation are so profound and yet tremendously subtle. I suppose this is why it can be so easily overlooked within the noise and activity of everyday living. Like Elijah waiting for God in the wilderness, I, too, am discovering God in the tiny whisper of silence.

10:30 a.m.

“Do you know what I have done for you?” is a question Jesus puts to his disciples after washing their feet. I had always understood this Gospel passage as an expression of Jesus’ service to humanity. And while it is certainly this, I have now come to appreciate it at a deeper level as the saving and redeeming presence of Jesus the Christ.

Our feet symbolize that which we use to travel and journey through life. They express that part of us which is closest, indeed, in direct contact with the world. Inevitably as we walk about here and there, going about our everyday business of living, our feet collect dust, get dirty, and become covered over with the muck and filth we are often required to walk through as we make our way about.

Just prior to his return to the Father from which he came, Jesus made the purpose and meaning of his presence known to his disciples--he came to wash their feet. We find ourselves objecting with Simon Peter, “you shall never wash my feet,” as we realize that we have become quite accustomed to the dirt. In fact we have grown to like it, our ambitions, desires, image, hopes, plans, and perhaps our very selves which we have gathered on our way. They all need to be washed away if we are to have a share in the inheritance of the Kingdom of God.

So I invite Jesus to wash my feet, scrubbing away the hardened dirt, the crusted dung, and all that is not truly me. And when it is all gone, leaving me stripped, barren, cold and wet, he, who shows his love for us to the end, dries and comforts me with his very presence.

2:00 p.m.

It is all about “LOVE”--the attentive, unattached, appreciation of God expressed throughout the whole of creation.

7:05 p.m.

At some point during mass this afternoon I was almost startled by the realization of the extent of God’s love for us. The shock of the insight revealed how ignorant I had been to this. I realize now how much of my “spiritual concerns” have stemmed from doubting this love.

9:30 p.m.

I’ve had another important revelation during evening prayer: there is something very wrong with the notion--world vs. God, or self vs. God. I have just realized that to seek “God alone” does not require one to abandon and deny the world and oneself, but rather to understand the whole of creation, including oneself, as an expression of God.

Saturday 12:00 p.m.

I have spent the entire morning in the loving presence of God. I feel as though the first three days of the retreat have allowed me to work out some difficulties I have had in the way I have understood my relationship with God, the world, and others. Now that things have been “worked out,” God and I have simply spent a wonderful morning together. I am falling in love.

5:15 p.m.

As my love for God deepens, so, too does my love for others. Just as the love one may have for a dancer increases one’s ability to love,

understand, and appreciate the dance--so too, does the love of God lead one to a greater appreciation, understanding, and love for his dance which is the whole of creation.

Sunday 9:25 a.m.

Deep peace. How simple and wonderful it all is! As I continue to spend my time in prayer loving God, praising God, revering God, and thanking God, I find I am, perhaps for the first time in my life, free--and it is with the newfound freedom that I want nothing more than to serve the One who has freely given it to me.

7:00 p.m.

We have shared our final meal together and were free to speak to each other for the first time in five days. Strangely we didn't have all that much to say which was not already more fully conveyed in our smiles. As we said good-bye to one another I felt as though I had come to know these people in silence better than many I have talked with for years. I am grateful that our unique and wonderful journeys have intersected here at this place and time. In sharing the silence together we have realized an eternal connection between us.

We are all pilgrims on the way, wandering about here and there, seeking and sometimes finding, asking and sometimes receiving. We go about our way in life passing by and mingling with one another for a few minutes, hours, days, or years, only to eventually move on and continue along the way.

I come away from the retreat filled with the appreciation of the value and meaning of all we encounter on our journeys and cannot help smiling as I realize, although only vaguely, where we are headed. □

I Sit to Meditate

I sit to awaken the sleeping Buddha; I
sit to see God, but not through a glass darkly; I
sit to intone the ninety-nine names of Allah,
one after another as in a rosary;
I sit and chant to He who died and rose again;
I sit to rejoice in the Lord of the dance; I
sit as corn kernel offered in the morning to
the new day's sun; I sit to honor earth for her
gifts which sustain all life; I sit as whispered prayer
to the gentle Guadalupe; I sit to think
of a question for the Rebbe and receive a
dollar; I sit to become pristine awareness,
the first crocus of Spring; I sit to wipe the dust
from my mind's diamond; I sit to become black, white,
red and yellow; I sit to be a rainbow; I
sit to breathe in suffering's carbon monoxide;
I sit to breathe out the pure air of compassion;
I sit to help you, only if you consent to
be helped; I sit to help myself despite myself;
I sit to find myself, not who you say I am,
nor who I say I am; I sit to lose myself,
like writing my name with ink on water; I sit
to find you after all these years; I sit to let
you go and weep; I sit because it feels good; I
sit because it doesn't feel good and I'm trying
to make it feel good; I sit to watch whatever
arises arise and watch whatever ceases
cease; I sit to know that "I" and "sit" are words; I
sit to sense the smile of Ghandi who said the name
of God, in the garden, when he was shot; I sit
as burning body in the Manikarnika
ghat in Varanasi; I sit to feel delight

in the first bite of a champagne truffle; I sit
 to see Race Point in a peach pink dawn; I sit to
 see the Sandia Crest in a mauve sunset; I
 sit to be enthroned as Quetzalcoatl, the plumed
 serpent; I sit to heal all beings with my wings
 of swords and flames; I sit to become the precious
 teacher, Guru Rinpoche, who buried treasures
 everywhere, even my heart; I sit to be
 Nagarjuna, the king of Nagas who, as he
 ceased meditating was overheard to say, "I
 did not sit, did not not sit, not both, not neither.

Edwin Bokert

Choice Wine

Do not hurry happiness, for it should slide
 Unnoticed into your heart,
 As the moonlight shimmer steals silently
 Across the pond.

Sip joy as finest wine from crystal goblets,
 Never as the sailor swills mead from his flagon.
 Let each oaken droplet dance on your tongue
 And play on your lips.

Let its sweetness overcome you
 As the fleece cloud blankets the mountain top.
 Hie not, child,
 For joy must grow in its own time.

A psychotherapist and meditator, Edwin Bokert has done research and given workshops on dreams and altered states.

Let not the impetuous impatience for wonders imagined
Disguise the marvels of glories alive.
Calm yourself, be still.
The chalice is before you filled to the brim.

Bliss, as if the choicest wine,
Will improve in bouquet and in piquancy in time.
Quaff not the nectar to pour a second cup,
For you may find the decanter to be empty.

Rather, let this drought be as your last.
Love's timepiece has no markings to note the beginning or the end.
Taste slowly; sip deeply, The goal
Close your eyes to dream.

Ralph B. Johnson

Ralph B. Johnson is an administrator in an elementary school in upstate New York. He claims he has been "squirreling away bits and pieces of his soul in desk drawers and file cabinets" for thirty-five years. He now generously is sharing his work with us in hopes it may "gently touch another soul."

We regularly receive and periodically reprint letters from our readers. We also receive messages through our website on the World Wide Web. (We can be reached at <http://www.fip.org>) Here is a sampling of recent comments, compliments, and prayer requests. Let us hear from you, too. We want to know your thoughts and concerns.

From our Mailbox

Ever since my husband died (11 years ago) some kind friend has seen to it your journal was sent to me. It helped me through many a sorrowful time.

C. G.; Pennsylvania

It gave me great joy when I received my first copy of *Fellowship in Prayer*. Please extend my deep gratitude to my spiritual friend for the generous gesture. I am sharing this publication with other friends as it was my resource reading during my retreat.

J. C.; The Philippines

I am most impressed with your magazine. Nowhere have I found such intelligent, honest, inclusive spiritual reflection from delightfully various traditions.

C. N.; Maryland

Prayer is and always has been the rip-line of my life. More and more praying for others in need has become my most enjoyable pursuit. I welcome each and every issue of your magazine. I am enclosing extra money for a subscription for whomever needs it.

G.H.; Oregon

Fellowship in Prayer is a wonder-full (not a misspelling!) experience to go through each issue, which I do at least three times. Then I pass it on to a nursing home in the area.

H.H.; Massachusetts

This has been a Godsend of a magazine. The diversity allows for a variety of expressions. One does not have to feel trapped by the "one way" approach...the common sharing is crucial to my psyche at this point. The magazine was given to me...now I am giving it to others.

J.B.; New Hampshire

I recently moved into a retirement home. I live alone. I'm the last one of my family. *Fellowship in Prayer* keeps me abreast with a lifestyle I treasure. I am a retired arts and crafts teacher... I share my copy with my friends here.

L. M.; Texas

I have decided to cancel my subscriptions only because I find I'm not taking the time to read much of the mail....the things that drew me especially to your magazine were the wonderfully meditative pictures. Thank you for those. Who knows, I may be back someday.

M. A.

From our Website 

I found your site on the internet by doing a search on Prayer. I feel prayer is the one and only thing that may help my situation. I seem to be in a deep depression. I have failed to help myself on my own. I feel God is the only one who can deliver me from this dark despair. I feel lost and alone in this fight and need your help in prayer... I need great changes in my life and need God's help to do so. Thanks.

V. B.

I am a Christian who needs prayer. I am looking for a new job because I do not like my current position....Lastly, I ask that God reveal to my wife and me what he wants us to do in our lives to serve him.

D. G.; Tennessee

Today I got to see your entire home page and it is lovely! I am a student of Eknath Easwaran as well as the clerk of my monthly meeting (Religious Society of Friends). Your journal is very important to me. This past year, for my husband's birthday, I gave him your book, *The Gift of Prayer*. It has many lovely passages that are suitable for meditation. Perhaps the electronic world of cyberspace will allow me to thank you in a concrete way for the pleasure and meaningfulness you have brought into my life.

S.T.; Connecticut

Prayer Requests



Prayers for healing have been requested for the following persons. Please join us in lifting them in prayer.

Theresa from a gallbladder ailment

Mike and Becky from cancer

Frances from a recent stroke

Mary from an auto accident and for emotional strength

Patrick from drug addiction

Linda from sugar addiction

Mary and Alex from kidney failure

Rich from lupus

Peter from AIDS

Mark from two surgeries in two weeks

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3227
Phone: 609.924.6863
Fax: 609.924.6910
Web site: <http://www.fip.org>.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Paul Walsh

EDITOR

Rebecca Laird

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Linda D. Baumann

TRUSTEES

Kathryn G. Brown
President Emeritus, Co-Founder

Paul Walsh
President

Howard S. Ende
Vice President and Treasurer

Frederick J. Olessi
Vice President and Secretary

Rabbi Samuel M. Silver
Vice President Emeritus

Rev. Dr. Arthur Caliendo

Werner Mark Linz

Charles Lunnin

Ven. Gelongma Trime Lhamo

Lorraine Sciarra

Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Williamson

© Copyright 1997 by *Fellowship in Prayer*

Material in this publication is copyrighted and may not be reproduced by photocopy or any other means without written permission.

Vol. 48, No. 1

ADVISORS

Dr. Marjorie Bankson
The Rev. Dr. Thomas Berry
Mother Tessa Bielecki
The Rev. Dr. Harvey Cox
Dr. Joan Halifax
The Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh
Shelia Holtgrieve
Ram Kolluri
Dr. Daniel Martin
The Very Rev. Dr. James Parks Morton
Elizabeth Ostuni
Virginia Prescott
The Rev. Hazel Staats-Westover
Anne Walsh

For six bi-monthly issues of *Fellowship in Prayer*, send your name, address, and \$16 to Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Free subscriptions are available for those unable to pay.

We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, on 8 ½ by 11 inch paper, or on a disk, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Please include a brief biography.

We are often asked to share names and addresses with other non-profit spiritual organizations whose work might be of interest to you. If that's not all right with you, please drop us a note and we will withhold your name.

ISSN 0014-9837

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

Address Correction Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Princeton, NJ
Permit No. 415

For A World United in Prayer